

# Between angels and demons: the “Novissimi” series from Carabuco<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The Novissimi constitute a doctrine from the Catholic Church. *Postrimerías* is the Spanish equivalent, and defines a series of paintings we may find in America. This paper shall discuss one of these series – the Carabuco cycle – as one of the most important artistic achievements in the Viceroyalty of Peru.

**Keywords:** *Novissimi. Carabuco. Angels. Demons.*

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When entering an ancient Catholic temple (and by ancient we simply refer to temples whose execution and decoration were carried out before the 1960s<sup>1</sup>), the expectation is to find images with religious motifs, both paintings and sculptures. One of the themes that could be represented is the *Novissimi*, which has a significant recurrence in the Andean Catholic temples of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.

*Novissimi* is the transliteration of the Latin term *novissima*, which means “the last things”. For French historian Jean Delumeau (2003, p. 302), the tenacity of the theme of Death and the search for eschatological signs are characteristic traits common to both the Catholic and the Protestant worlds. The search for meaning towards its end, on the part of humanity, is one of the heydays of the Christian catechism, and, therefore, common to both traditions. At the time when the two religions vied for influence in Europe and the New World so as to ensure faithfulness to their doctrines, it was common ground between the two that the Ultimate End would become the purpose of existence (p. 302).

*Novissimi* is a reference to the biblical passage from Ecclesiastes chapter 7, verse 40 in the Vulgate (JERÔNIMO, s.d.): *In omnibus operibus tuis memorare novissima tua. et in aeternum non peccabis*<sup>2</sup> (“In all that you do, remember thy end and you shall never sin”). The Ecclesiastes, also known as Sirach is one of the deuterocanonical books of the Bible, considered sacred by most Christian churches, mainly by the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Catholic Churches, being partially accepted by the Orthodox Churches and the Protestant Anglican Church. Other Protestant Churches do not include it in their canon because they follow Jewish tradition, which considers it an edifying example, but not a holy book. Therefore, this is a theme of differentiation between Catholic and Protestant faiths (GEISLER, 1999, p. 52-53).

1 During the 1960s, more precisely between 1962 and 1965, the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council took place. Dedicated to a liturgical renewal, it was the prerogative of the Council the necessity to change the conception of Catholic temples, in order to conform to the redefinition of the guidelines on Christian philosophy and of Catholic liturgy itself. This change greatly reduced the presence of paintings and sculptures with sacred motifs in Catholic buildings (Baptista, 2015, p. 57-58).

2 All biblical passages are taken from Bíblia de Jerusalém (2002).

The doctrine of the *Novissimi* preaches that the Ultimate Ends of men cross through four specific moments: Death, Judgment, Hell and Paradise. The corresponding term in Castilian to *Novissimi* is *Postrimerías*, and it gives name to the series that will be discussed next in this article. Death, of course, is a person's final event in this life. It is from death that the individual is at the disposal of Judgment. According to dom Estevão Tavares Bettencourt (s.d., p. 5), from Death onwards, creatures emancipate themselves from time, but they do not start to live Eternity as of yet. Although the moment when it will occur is not known, it is necessary to always be prepared for that moment and to live a life that dignifies it, helping the soul in the moments that will follow. Soon after death, indeed, comes the verdict: the soul will be saved or it is lost. This trial, the so-called Judgment, has two stages: the Particular and the Final<sup>3</sup>. The Private Judgment is the occasion when

God sheds his light upon the soul soon after death, so that it becomes clearly conscious of what its earthly life was really like; it recognizes the meaning and value, the merits and demerits of its existence; everything they did and omitted, both good and bad, down to the last details becomes clear to them (BETTENCOURT, s.d., p. 38).

In this first judgment the soul is destined for the joys of Paradise or the torments of Hell. Although there is no allusion in the Bible to the Particular Judgment itself, Christians, at least since the 10th century, already referred to the scales of Saint Michael the Archangel judging souls, which has consolidated as a theme in Christian iconography, with the scales indicated as an attribute of this saint<sup>4</sup>.

After the moment of the Particular Judgment, there is no chance of a second trial<sup>5</sup>. The possibility of Purgatory is not an intermediate path, because

3 The lack of knowledge of the moment of death of each human being echoes a broader lack of knowledge: that of the moment when Christ will return and the world will come to an end. There is a parallel, therefore, between the Particular Judgment and the Last Judgment. In common, humanity's ignorance, a topic reiterated in Christian exegesis over the centuries. There are several scriptural texts that deal with this topic. Particularly popular over the centuries was the parable of the wise virgins and the foolish virgins, described in Matthew 25:1-13. In this passage, the bridegroom who is to arrive was interpreted as Christ.

4 On this topic, related to the context of the Last Judgment, see, for example, Quírico (2007).

5 On the subject of the sentencing of souls, see Bettencourt (s.d.), especially the modules "Private Judgment" and "Purgatory (I) and (II)".

it is already part of the dimension of salvation. In fact, although the judgment is twofold, the result will be the same. The difference is that the Particular Judgment is a strictly individual matter, while the Last Judgment has a communal aspect (BETTENCOURT, s.d., p. 159). According to Bettencourt (p. 159), based on biblical passages Mt 25, 31-46; Job 5:26; Job 12.48,

each person's life is inserted within a group and it is convenient for other men to know how much they owe to the behavior of each of their brothers; we are solidary and interdependent among ourselves; therefore it is opportune that the effects of this solidarity be manifested in all men.

In Catholic doctrine, Purgatory is not a destination in itself, it is an EVO<sup>6</sup> – long passage for imperfect souls to purge their sins so that they can enjoy Heaven afterwards. Purgatory is not part of the *Novissimo* tradition, but it becomes a popular subject in visual representations from the 15th century onwards. After the Last Judgment, it shall disappear, as it is a temporary ultraterrestrial instance, which exists to purify the souls that cannot immediately enter Paradise, but that will be saved before or at the moment of the Last Judgment<sup>7</sup>. The Final Judgment, therefore, is the moment in which the sentence pronounced in the Particular Judgment will be confirmed; it marks the end of all things, it is the supreme judgment and a defining event for Humanity<sup>8</sup>.

The ultraterrestrial instances – Hell, Paradise and Purgatory – are inhabited by beings responsible for fulfilling the destiny of men. Hell, of course, is reserved for demons. With regard to divine helpers, however, the matter is no longer so simple. Although Paradise evidently includes angels,

6 Bettencourt (s.d., p. 5) explains that the souls, as soon as they leave their bodies, emancipate themselves from time and come into existence under the EVO regime. According to the Saint Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologicam* (AQUINO, 2001, p.241-242), "the evo means the measure of spiritual substances".

7 On the development of the concept of Purgatory, see the still fundamental book by Le Goff (1996).

8 This theme was not a consensus within the Catholic Church for a long time. Questions such as whether Paradise would be accessible to the sin-free before the Last Judgment or whether there would be a waiting territory for souls until the moment of the Last Judgment stirred discussions in the early centuries of the Church and during the Middle Ages (there are references to the theme in the councils of Lyon, 1274, and Basel-Ferrara-Florence, between 1431 and 1439) and are a rich historical source.

the representation of angelic figures in the *Novísimi* is not restricted to the idyllic destiny of souls.

Over the centuries, in Europe, the development of figurations representing these celestial beings was strengthened, turning them into the representation of the Abstract and the Invisible Force. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, we already have in the Old Testament a detailed system of angelology, a field that studies the theme of angels. In the book of Genesis, beings of light present in the heavenly court are described; however, there was no definition of their appearance nor of their names. The first appearance in the Bible of these beings occurs in the passage in which Adam tries to return to Paradise, shortly after being expelled.

And when He had cast the man out, He set cherubim on the east side of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life (GÊNESIS, 3:24).

Between the end of the Middle Ages and the First Modern Period, in Europe, the faithful were already sensitized to these themes. In the Andes, in an effort to evangelize the native peoples, Spanish missionaries began to develop alternatives to facilitate the process of assimilation of these new elements. In this way, autochthonous practices are placed in parallel with Christian ones, so that locals perceive similarities and analogies between beliefs, so that these new practices can be gradually absorbed. Various Christian themes are included in this process. The representation of angels, being one of the most accepted themes among the Andeans, becomes one of the themes that most occupy the first religious constructions, not only as autonomous scenes, but also inserted in the different series of the *Novísimi* that we can find in many churches present in the Spanish-American territories. This is the case, for example, of the series of paintings analyzed in this article, also known as *Postrimerías del hombre*, which can be found in the Iglesia de Puerto Mayor, in Carabuco, in the former Viceroyalty of Peru.

The Greater Port of Carabuco is currently the third section of the province of Eliodoro Camacho in the department of La Paz, Bolivia. It is situated on the southeastern shore of Lake Titicaca and its native population are the Aymara (MUSSO et al., 2010).

The small agricultural village that houses the Igreja de Puerto Mayor was not chosen at random. The reason for building a church in this specific location is the cross that is to have been erected there, and which carries with it a curious narrative baggage (CAVALCANTE, 2009, p. 44-47). According to legend, this cross would be the work of one of Christ's apostles, who would have been in America before the arrival of the conquerors. This event is reiterated by the small strip at the bottom of the paintings in the series *Postrimerías del hombre*. This apostle would have been Saint Thomas, as described in the first medallion that composes a narrative sequence in the panels, and with which we will deal next<sup>9</sup>.

In fact, during the 16th and 17th centuries, it was a common thought among religious workers in America, both under Portuguese and Spanish rule, the idea that in times long before the arrival of Europeans to America, the apostle Thomas would have preached the Gospel to the indigenous people of the region (TUDISCO, GUERRA, 2010, p. 98)<sup>10</sup>. The saint thus emerges as the author of elements of material culture that would be represented mainly by footprints on rocks<sup>11</sup>, stone crosses and paths, as indicated by Cavalcante (2009) from the reports of doctrinal literature he analyzed<sup>12</sup>. The Carabuco cross would be one of the elements of this material culture. However, it is not known if the cross really existed or if it was just another European invention to justify indigenous indoctrination. Let us pay attention to the fact that Augustinian Friar Afonso Ramos Gavilán (1570-1639) maintained that an apostle had been in the Americas before European presence, and the Jesuit Father Antonio Ruiz de Montoya (1585-1652) concluded from the evidence that he found that this apostle must be Thomas<sup>13</sup>.

9 Medallion 7, however, mentions that Saint Bartholomew, to whom the church is dedicated, would have been responsible for making the cross.

10 In fact, according to Christian tradition, after the event of Pentecost, described in Acts 2: 1-4, Jesus' disciples went on to preach his word throughout the world.

11 According to Cavalcante (2009, p. 47-49), the footprints found as vestiges of the pre-colonial period in the Americas are the object of archaeological traditions. As such, they are not restricted to the material vestige itself and are compared with other evidence. In the case of footprints, they are attributed to Saint Thomas by 17th century Jesuits such as Father Manoel da Nóbrega, in Brazil and Father Antonio Ruiz de Montoya.

12 The historian analyzes in his book the reports and archaeological remains of the presence of Saint Thomas in the Americas. Among his sources, he uses "Historia del Célebre Santuario de Nuestra Señora de Copacabana y sus Milagros e Invención de la Cruz de Carabuco" by Friar Gavilán (1621) and "Conquista Espiritual" by Father Montoya (1639).

13 The accounts of both religious men are an example of the approximation of the myth of the

The supposed coming of an apostle of Christ before the presence of the colonizers is important, as it includes the New World in the divine plan, even if it is not mentioned in Scripture. This politically implies the legitimization of the subjugation of the native peoples of America, as a divine punishment for having, at some point, rejected the Word of the Lord (LA JOUSSANLEDIÈRE, 2012, p. 108). The main function of the narrative of Saint Thomas and his cross in Carabuco would be to synchronize local history with world religious history and, at the same time, to deconstruct the history of local indigenous peoples.

The Spanish conquest of the Andes, begun in 1532, thus begins the double project of evangelization and Hispanization of the indigenous population, given that the Christian catechizing mission is one of the legal justifications for the Spanish conquest. The importance attributed to the evangelization of the natives at the colonial level is incorporated into the efforts of a considerable number of missionaries and indoctrinators.

However, it seems that this work did not immediately give the expected results, since complaints are repeatedly found in the correspondence of the time about the small fruit that, until the end of the 16th century, the catechization of the Andean peoples had borne (Gareis, 2004, p. 263-264).

In fact, in 1608 the priest Francisco de Ávila (1573-1648) put the colonial authorities on alert, denouncing his Andean parishioners for idolizing the autochthonous deities, despite having been baptized a long time ago. This denunciation triggers the first campaign of extirpation of idolatries in the Archbishopric of Lima. Shortly after raising the alarm, in 1610, Ávila was entrusted with this mission by the Archbishop of Lima. Various efforts aimed at extirpation followed in the course of the 17th century. During these campaigns thousands of people were condemned, many representations of Andean deities destroyed, in addition to artifacts related to their beliefs and the mummies of their ancestors (GAREIS, p. 264). We will return to the issue of idolatries at the end of this article.

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western Saint Thomas with the myth of the eastern Saint Thomas. In fact, the Jesuit Montoya defended, in the 17th century, that in the East the apostle would also have left as a souvenir of his preaching a large stone cross with signs of the blood of his martyrdom.

Thus, since the arrival of the first evangelizers to the New World, the need arises to adapt the way of transmitting Christian dogma to these peoples, a concern present in catechetical literature from the 16th to the 18th centuries. In contrast to early catechization in Europe, where Christianity and paganism shared a common base of knowledge and tradition, evangelization in America quickly moved towards religious coercion, from which Catholic dogmas were introduced simultaneously and also in conjunction with Western customs and values (MACCORMACK, 1985, p. 466) – after all, we are dealing with social groups that had never heard of Christ and the entire mythological framework that sustains him.

It is from this perspective that we need to consider the importance of images with Christian themes in the processes of conquest and domination of Spanish-American territories, which evidently include the series of *Postrimerías* that appear repeatedly in these regions. While in Europe the concepts of Last Judgment, Hell and Paradise were established for centuries in the Christian imagination, in America they are implanted together with the entire eschatological doctrine of Christianity. In this way, themes are presented in indigenous peoples' churches and chapels, especially, acting as essential elements in the doctrinal work for the adequate conversion of indigenous peoples. This is the case of the Iglesia de Puerto Mayor series. In fact, in 1683, the priest of Carabuco, José de Arellano, asked the painter José López de los Ríos to produce a series of four paintings on the *Postrimerías* to be placed along the walls of the nave<sup>14</sup>.

The various series of *Postrimerías* that we find in Spanish-American territories are a clear example of the weight and dimension of the Inevitable that marks Christian history – defined linearly by a beginning that is the creation of the universe, and which will end at the moment of Christ's return at the end of time. In the history of ideas and images of Western culture, this circumstance was felt, thought and represented in a multi-

14 José de Arellano ordered the decoration of the main chapel and of the choir, bought the chapel's organ, and also commissioned the large panels to be painted by José López de los Ríos, who finished them in 1684 (cf. Gisbert, 1998b, p. 49-59). We know little about José Lopez de los Ríos through historiography. We do not know if he was of indigenous origin, or even if he was a qualified teacher by some association of the Viceroyalty of Peru.

tude of ways (ARIÈS, 2000, p. 142). The *Postrimerías*, therefore, are an indoctrination theme that enjoys great popularity in the Viceroyalty of Peru, both in literature form and iconographically. In fact, we find sources in Andean literature that confirm that this topic is an important instrument of indoctrination<sup>15</sup>. It appears, for example, in the work printed in 1585 by Antonio Ricardo (1532-1605/1606) entitled *Tercero Cathecismo y Exposición de la Doctrina Christiana por Sermones*<sup>16</sup>.

In the Viceroyalty of Peru, this ultraterrestrial imagery was systematically implanted throughout the territory during the 17th and 18th centuries, as one of the ways to ensure the process of evangelization and conversion that began in the early years of the conquest. Visually, as in its European equivalents, it presents the struggle between good and evil, between the True and the False, and it presents a message anchored in the relationship between the sin committed in life and the punishment one will submit to in the after-life. In this way, there is an effective visual strategy to carry out what Serge Gruzinski (1991, p. 197) defined as “the colonization of the imaginary”.

It is in this context, then, that the series of the *Novissimi* de Carabuco is conceived. Commissioned by José de Arellano, the paintings of the *Novissimi* have large dimensions<sup>17</sup> and, in addition to the main scenes, they have 30 episodes concerning the story of the cross of Carabuco in medallions distributed among the paintings. According to Canadian art historian Sebastián Ferrero (2015), the narrative of how an apostle (Thomas or Bartholomew) built the Carabuco cross before Europeans arrived in the region is represented in ten medallions present in the paintings of Glory and Purgatory. The other twenty medallions, displayed in the paintings of Hell and the Last Judgment, tell of demons’ plans to destroy the cross (p. 651). Although this article does not focus on the analysis of the medallions, it shall follow their order for its analysis.

15 On the importance of the theme of the Last Judgment, including the representations of Hell and Paradise, in the conversion processes of Christians – neophytes or not – in Western Europe, see, for example, Quirico (2014, in particular chapter 3).

16 Antonio Ricardo brought the first printing press to the Americas, and is considered an important disseminator of both Christian doctrine to native peoples and of their native languages (Quechua and Aymara) to the Old World. About *Tercero Cathecismo y Exposición de la Doctrina Christiana por Sermones*, Antonio Ricardo produced it in a trilingual version, in the Aymara, Castilian and Quechua languages, after the Third Council of Limense (1583-1591) recommended the diffusion of the word of Christ among the autochthonous populations.

17 The painting entitled Gloria measures 4.12 x 5.00 meters; the Purgatory scene, 4.12 x 4.94 meters; the Inferno painting is 4.21 x 8.34 meters; finally, the Doomsday scene is 4.14 x 8.16 meters (Landa, 2005).

Thus, the first painting of the cycle is *Gloria* (“Glory”) [Figure 1]. Its name evidently refers to the maximum glory of a Christian’s life: reaching heaven, Paradise. Despite the Edenic character with which America is imagined and portrayed at the time of the discoveries by Europeans, whether in letters, chronicles or images (see HOLLANDA, 2000, p. 7), for this painting to fulfill the expected main religious function – that is, to convert the natives –, it would not make sense to portray Glory as the place where the

**Figure 1**

José Lopes de los Ríos, *Gloria* (De la serie *Las postrimerías*), 1684, oil on canvas, 4.12x 5.00 meters, La Paz, Church of Carabuco



natives live. After all, why would they embrace Christianity in search of eternal salvation in Paradise, if paradise was the place where they already dwelled? In this way, it can be observed that in this painting there is no element that identifies Paradise with the community around the church, contrary to what is done in paintings that aim to instill fear in the viewer.

The painter, or the principal, chooses to represent Paradise using the theme of the Celestial Court, a common motif in Middle Ages European paintings and which derives from the descriptions by Pseudo-Dionysius,

the Areopagite<sup>18</sup>. The composition of the painting is divided into four areas, organized around a median vertical axis, formed by the Holy Trinity on an orb at the upper end, and extended by a cross supported by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux<sup>19</sup>. At the upper level, next to the Trinity, we find the disciples of Christ and some of the most important saints of the Christian pantheon who lived during Jesus' time, or shortly after his death and resurrection: we clearly discern, for example, Peter and Paul, John the Baptist and the Evangelist. Mary is in a prominent position, on the left side of Christ, who directs his gaze to her. The presence of Mary in representations of Paradise is more common when she is enthroned next to Christ, or when the iconography of the Celestial Court is associated with the coronation of the Virgin. Her inclusion in the scene, however, reaffirms the Marian devotion that sustains much of the region's religiosity.

Above the ranks of saints and the Trinity, richly clad angels behold the divine vision. Two larger angels stand out, bearing golden thuribles. In the book of Revelation, an angel carries a thurible in reference to the offering of prayers to saints. The angels thus act once again as an instrument of communication between the divine and human planes<sup>20</sup>. In the context of the scene, this iconographic detail highlights the importance not only of prayers on the part of the faithful, but also the possibility of intercession of the saints. We therefore have a stimulus to personal devotion.

In the second register, divided by the cross, José López de los Ríos includes, on the left side, members of some of the main religious orders responsible for the evangelization process in America – Dominicans, Franciscans and Jesuits are of note. The use of this type of image in the process of convincing one about the “good intentions” of representatives of the Catholic Church seems clear. On the right side of the cross several martyr saints are represented: Catherine of Alexandria, Agnes and Lucy are the most evident, easily identified by their iconographic attributes.

18 On possible modes of representation of Paradise in European art, see Baschet (1998).

19 *El Purgatorio, el Juicio Final, el Infierno y el Gloria*, 2005.

20 “Then I saw the seven angels standing before God: they were given seven trumpets. Another angel came to stand at the altar, with a golden thurible. He was given a large amount of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne. And from the hand of the angel the smoke of incense with the prayers of the saints ascended before God” (Rev 8:2-5).

In the third register we find, next to St. Bernard, who holds the cross, several angels; most of them feature the Arma Christi (i.e. the symbols of the Passion of Christ – the spear, the ladder, the column and Veronica), but there are also angels with musical instruments. As described by the Celestial Hierarchy, angels with musical instruments would be the last celestial class, expressing their devotion by singing hymns. The representation of musical angels was developed to emphasize their role as mediators between divine harmony and that of creation, between the heavenly plane and that of men (PSEUDO-DIONÍSIO. 2007, p. 161). It is up to these beings to protect humans, as well as to carry out the communion and union between men and God's directives, since they belong to the hierarchy that is closest to the earthly plane (p. 139).

Finally, in the last register, we find the five medallions which contain the Tunupá/the apostle narrative, and the figure of José de Arellano at the lower right end of the painting, kneeling and in a position of prayer, with his hands folded. It is symptomatic that the author of the works is next to the representation of Paradise in the series of *Postrimerías*, as it legitimizes his work as a saint – and, at least visually, his place of glory with the saints and the Trinity is guaranteed.

The next painting, on the other wall of the church's nave, and positioned in front of Glory, represents Purgatory [Figure 2]. The visual strategy used by José Lopes de los Ríos to represent his concept and doctrine is quite interesting. In addition to the medallions in the lower register, the screen can be divided into two scenes: on the left, we have a possible reference to the theme of the Mass of St. Gregory<sup>21</sup>; on the right, the purification of souls within the flames, so that they can enter the kingdom of heaven, whose entrance is represented in the upper right corner of the panel: the tower flanked by Saint Peter and Saint Paul. In the visual center of the painting, Christ appears holding the cross, and the dove of the Holy Spirit acts as a link between him and God the Father.

21 The painting entitled Gloria measures 4.12 x 5.00 meters; the Purgatory scene, 4.12 x 4.94 meters; the Inferno painting is 4.21 x 8.34 meters; finally, the Doomsday scene is 4.14 x 8.16 meters (LANDA, 2005).



**Figure 2**  
 José Lopes de los Ríos, Purgatorio o la intercesión de Cristo, la Virgen y santos para lograr redención y alcanzar gloria después de muerte, 1684, oil on canvas 4,12 x 4,94 meters, La Paz, Church of Carabuco  
 Available at: <http://artecolonialamericano.az.uniandes.edu.co:8080/art-works/4191>. Access on May 31 2022.

Some details are important so that we might consider the religious functions of images within the theme of Purgatory, in particular when we think about the context of the evangelization of the natives. Saint Francis seems to interconnect the scenes of the Mass of Saint Gregory and that of the souls in Purgatory – easily recognizable because of the tear in his habit, from which the stigma on his side emerges, Francis directs his gaze to the group in the fire; the presence of the *Poverello*, as well as the inclusion of the Virgin Candelária of Copacabana, both reinforce the idea of the

possibility of intercession on the part of a saint. Mary, in fact, is close to the angels, acting in the referral of souls to the celestial plane<sup>22</sup>.

Finally, one of the characters who burns in the purgatory fire – a religious authority, identified by the miter that stands out over her head – stretches their left arm in an attempt to reach a rosary that is extended to them by a female figure who, with a child in her lap, comes to the aid of the souls in Purgatory.

If Purgatory could possibly have an outstanding didactic function in the process of conversion of the natives – after all, this theme emphasizes the possibility of remission of sins after death – the inclusion of the intercessor saints, and especially of the rosary, makes it even more visually evident notions linked to the economy of salvation, of which prayers, as well as alms and masses *pro animae*, are primordial elements. So, when considering a hypothesis of the use of the *Novissimi* by the colonizing project, it is possible to take into account that Purgatory appears as a factor of negotiation between Europeans and indigenous leaders.

The next painting in the series is *Hell*. It is also organized in three levels: at the bottom are, once again, the narrative medallions; in the middle register, souls are tortured by demons and monsters; different punishments are shown: in the chaotic composition, the cogwheel on which the condemned are imprisoned and the large monstrous mouth stand out, which, according to a visual and literary tradition dating back to the biblical exegesis of the first centuries of the Christian era, indicates the entrance to the infernal *locus*<sup>23</sup>. The painting, similar to others based on the same theme, is an agglomeration of naked bodies subjected to torture by an army of demons with different characteristics: horns, ears and bat wings, beaks, huge animal jaws. The objective of clearly conveying the possibility of eternal horror to the faithful, in particular to the natives, seems evident.

22 The Virgin in the scene has elements very similar to the representation of the Virgin of Copacabana. Her attire contains her wide robe, ornamented with pearl strips, crown, and a candle in one of her hands, symbolizing the purifying power of fire and its light as a guide to faith. One of the most significant devotions of the Andes, the Virgin of Copacabana has its cult derived from the evangelization done by the colonizers, becoming one of the mechanisms that facilitate the conversion and evangelization of the population close to Lake Titicaca, then expanding to the other neighboring regions. Her devotion is yet another instrument of religious syncretism that incorporates myths and beliefs that were already part of the local culture (see Gutiérrez, 2015, p. 22-27).

23 On the Mouth of Hell, and the iconography of the infernal region as a whole, see Quirico (2011).

**Figure 3**  
José Lopes de los Ríos,  
Muerte e Infierno  
("Death and Hell")  
(From the series "Las  
postrimerías"), 1684,  
oil on canvas, 4,21  
x8,34 meters, La Paz,  
Church of Carabuco



Finally, the upper register shows everyday scenes of the earthly world, in which we perceive the interference of demons; the scene of *Death*, the first to constitute the doctrine of the *Novissimi*, is reduced, in the Carabuco cycle, to a detail at the upper right end of the painting of *Inferno*. Death is personified by the Grim Reaper – a skeleton who, with his scythe raised, has just struck a boy from a group that, carelessly, seems not to understand the dangers that surround him; one of the youths, in fact, is actually a transmuted demon, recognizable only by the pair of horns that protrudes from its head.

At last, closing the cycle of the *Postrimerías* by Carabuco, the painting of the Last Judgment [Figure 4] – the *Durissimum iudicium*, as it can be read at the upper end of the panel. Both this painting and that of *Inferno* are larger than the other two in the cycle, possibly as a manner to stand out, since these themes would require greater prominence, as mentioned in the *Nueva Cronica* by Poma de Ayala (1980, p. 104). The composition of the scene is developed in three distinct levels. The first is that of heaven, in which the Holy Trinity appears centralized, on a vertical axis in which, from the upper end of the painting, there appear: God the Father, the Holy Spirit and Christ holding a cross, while also performing a gesture of blessing with the right hand. Flanking the Christ are Mary and John the

Baptist, forming the iconographic type of *Deesis* so characteristic of scenes of the Last Judgment<sup>24</sup>.

**Figure 4**

José Lopes de los Ríos, Juicio Final (From the series *Las postrimerías*), 1684, oil on canvas, 4,14x8,16 meters, La Paz, Church of Carabuco



We also recognize elements that refer to the text of the Apocalypse, such as the blackened sun next to the red moon: “The sun became dark as a black mane, the whole moon became red as blood” (Ap 6:12), and stars falling from the sky. Trumpeting angels announce the resurrection of bodies, which takes place in the record below: “The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch (...)” (Ap 8:10). To leave no doubt as to their relationship, the four trumpets emit Latin words that form the prayer *Surgite mortui venite ad iudicium*, which means “arise, dead, come to judgment”. Finally, as if it were a phylactery that unfolds flanking Mary, Christ and John the Baptist, two passages taken from the Gospel of Matthew: *Venite benedicti Patris mei possidete paratum vobis regnum a constitutione mundi*<sup>25</sup> and *Discedite a me maledicti in ignem aeternum qui paratus est diabolo et angelis eius*<sup>26</sup>.

24 The *Deesis*, thus visually indicating the possibility of intercession on the part of Mary and John the Baptist (or the Evangelist, as will be more common in regions of present-day France until the 14th century) – thus reinforcing the idea of salvation through devotion to the saints – had been very popular since the first visual representations of the Last Judgment in Europe.

25 “Come, you blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34).

26 “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41).

The second register is the terrestrial plane in which the resurrection of bodies is highlighted. In the center of the composition, just below the Christ, appears Saint Michael, who, with a scale in one hand and a sword of fire in the other, tramples and dominates the devil<sup>27</sup>. At the left and right edges of this level we have, respectively, the elect who are led to Paradise (the entrance is marked by a tower) and the reprobate who, driven out by an angel, go in despair to the mouth of Hell, pulled and dragged by demons. The third register, finally, counts once more with the medallions that deal with the narratives concerning the miracles of Carabuco.

As we approach the conclusion of this article, it should be noted that the emphasis the Carabuco series puts on the description of Purgatory and, particularly, of the infernal locus is remarkable. We must consider that visual representations of Hell have as one of their main purposes the desire to instigate a Christian ethics based on the articles of faith. In the elaboration of this dialectic of good and evil, of vice and virtue, the religious were aware of the efficiency of the references to infernal punishments. The rewards that await the elect in Paradise would not be effective enough as a stimulus to repentance and conversion. According to a Christian tradition that dates back to the first centuries, man's persuasion occurs more easily when possible punishments are emphasized. Already St Anselm (dead in 1109), in fact, claimed that only when gripped by the fear of eternal damnation could man be effectively brought to repentance (BEVINGTON et al., 1985, p. 38), and this will be a recurring theme in sermons in the last centuries of the Middle Ages. The emphasis on Hell, therefore, is mainly due to a "pedagogy of fear" (BENNASSAR, 1984, p. 174-182) established as a form of catechization. This way, Hell becomes an elementary piece of catechesis and preaching, both European and Spanish-American.

This emphasis is not restricted to the visual arts, whether in Europe or America. In the work published by the Catholic Church of the Viceroyalty of Peru, *Tercero Cathecismo y Exposición de la Doctrina Christiana por Sermones...* (1685), we can perceive how a Christian's options – salvation or condemnation – are constantly presented. In the last sermon, entitled *Del*

27 Michael is the main angel in all the Last Judgment scenes: by defeating Lucifer, he is granted the right to lead the Christian's soul to Paradise – Michael is the psychopomp saint par excellence in Christianity.

*juicio final*, Hell is explained in great detail. The sermon begins with the issue of Death, and the idea of *Vanitas* is also highlighted; then the text goes deeper into the options that await the soul after the divine sentence. “However, Paradise is barely mentioned, existing only as the place God and the angels meet” (ROMERO, SIRACUSANO, 2011, p. 120).

Juan Carlos Estenssoro Fuchs (2003) states that the doctrinal discourse prior to the Third Council of Lima (which took place between 1583 and 1591) presented a strong heterogeneity, resulting from the lack of an institutional structure in the region and the lack of uniformity regarding the possible approaches to introduce the Christian dogmas in the native people’s catechesis. Since the arrival of Viceroy Toledo in 1569, new evangelization rules were set. Starting with the Third Council, a pedagogical literature has been developed that seeks to combine persuasion and repression in the conversion process.

Thus, texts such as *Cathecismo breve*, *Cathecismo mayor* and *Plática breve* (1613) introduce the idea of Hell, still quite succinctly, as the place destined for those who do not respect God, where eternal torments and endless sadness await them, through reiterations that repeat themselves like a formula. In turn, the *Confessionario para los curas de indios* (1585) approaches the subject more explicitly, developing the concepts of guilt and sin necessary for the establishment of the sacrament of confession for most Indians – until then this was reserved only to the native elites. The *Confessionario* presents the concepts related to Hell through rhetorical questions that induce the faithful to understand, in their own flesh, the concept of eternity:

Only a mortal sin for a person to deserve fiery torment forever in Hell. Tell me, how would you feel if you were put on fire all day? And if they left you burning, what would you say? For how will you be burning in Hell for a year? And ten years? And a hundred years? And a thousand years, body and soul, and forever never without end? (DURÁN, 1990, p. 470).

The scene [Figure5], in which there is a preacher listening to the confession of a woman, whose mouth vomits animals, is an allusion to the theme of the battle for souls; this one, as well as the *Novissimi*, has an expressive popularity between the end of the Middle Ages and the First Modern Period in Europe (ILKÓ, 2016, p. 90). Its figuration consists of an angel and a demon vying for a person’s soul. The theme is probably popularized due to its easy association with the Christian conscience, the devil being

the personalization of sin (in the context of the Carabuco cycle, through practices considered idolatrous that are shown in the painting), and the angel the possibility of salvation. This explains the presence of an angel in a painting with an infernal motif, since they should not be represented in Hell – although, it should be noted, this detail is found in what would be the terrestrial surface over the infernal region, and not in Hell itself.

**Figure 5**  
José Lopes de los Ríos,  
Muerte e Infierno (de la  
serie Las Postrimerías)  
(detail), 1684, oil on  
canvas, 4,21 x 8,34  
meters, La Paz, Church  
of Carabuco



In the Andes, the representation of angels – whether in scenes from the *Postrimerías*, or in other iconographic areas – is inserted in a broader context of belief replacement. In fact, one of the possible reasons for the natives to assimilate the theme of angels is the recognition of elements that resemble aspects already known to them: for example, the natives associated the wings of these beings with the feathers that adorn their warriors. We must also consider the cult, by the natives, of elements linked to the natural world. The Church works strongly to combat this worship: drawing on a tradition that goes back to the book of Enoch<sup>28</sup>, which associates angels with the control of natural phenomena such as planets and stars, missionaries “created the angelic series, to replace the idolatry of

<sup>28</sup> Apocryphal book attributed to Enoch, ancestor of Noah, dated 200 BC, which brought prophecies and revelations.

the stars. This would be a possible explanation for the popularity of the angelic series in the Andean zone” (GISBERT, 2004, p. 87).

If the strategy of acculturation on the part of the Catholic Church in the Andes forms a movement that accommodates Andean religious festivities and symbols inside the liturgical year, seeking to Christianize the local culture in this way, the indigenous people managed to create their ways of resisting, covering up their true belief within reinterpretations of the Gospel and Christian saints.

Thus, conquerors and conquered coincided, unintentionally, in a high point for doctrine: a symbol could generate multiple meanings, while the Church expressed its eternal truths in visual images – an infallible method of catechesis (PINILLA, 1996, p. 239).

However, it should be noted that the phenomenon of the colonization of the imaginary, defined by Gruzinski, exemplifies not only the attempt to impose a Christian imaginary, but also traces of cultural resistance, indicating adaptations and reappropriations by those who, from a Christian perspective, occupied the sinner’s place: the natives. The practices understood from the point of view of the conqueror as “idolatrous” denote the persistence of a religiosity that, even in the 18th century, did not seem willing to disappear in private or domestic cults (SIRACUSANO, 2005, p. 309), but which eventually also appears in visual representations created by local artists. Thus, evangelizers, in an attempt to extirpate these practices, seek to associate the bad, the demonic and the false, represented in many of the images, to the presence of the indigenous people, their objects of worship and their ritual practices<sup>29</sup>.

This is the reason why we can see, in the *Hell* of Carabuco scene, indigenous women offering *keros* (an ancient Inca wooden vessel used in reli-

29 The extirpation of idolatries imposed by the missionaries was not able to prevent the direct relationship between Andean cosmology and angelology. As stated by Pinilla (1996), in the city of Ayacucho the indigenous people began to associate the angels with the spirits of the mountains, wamanis. They believed in a mutual relationship in which the Christian God ordained what Christians understood to be heaven, and the Andean gods commanded the laws of nature. “The Wamanis were to be angels who were influenced by evil to go against the teachings of God, then they were expelled from heaven and abandoned in the mountains of the human world with the mission to fulfill the desires of the greater power on Earth” (p. 267).

gious ceremonies) to a demon, while another demonic figure, with some men, plays instruments related to what became known as Taqui Oncoy. This resistance movement was ongoing in the 16th century, opposing both the Spanish Conquest and the expansion of Christianity in the region. The message in the painting, therefore, is clear: those who do not recognize the Christian God, or the new order established by the Spanish Crown, will certainly be condemned to eternal punishment in Hell.

The association of sinners with idolaters in Hell, in short, would serve as a tool to control the native population in general, and idolatrous practices in particular. The meditation on the *Novissimi* and its plastic reproduction, therefore, reaches an emblematic relevance in the context of the campaigns of extirpation of idolatries in America, in the 17th century. The *Postrimerías* of Carabuco are, even today, one of the great Spanish-American examples of the importance of images in the process of the *Conquista* (Conquest).

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